

STACEY STEERS: Films

In her handmade films, Stacey Steers works to undercut cultural biases in film representation and to return agency and independence to historic portrayals of women. She experiments with and pioneers new forms of animation in the surrealist tradition, using found footage in a novel way to create provocative narratives. Steers selects sequences from early cinematic sources, prints the frames and re-contextualizes the action, allowing the 'story' assembled from appropriated images to evolve over time. She inserts her actors into newly imagined environments with fragments of 19th century engravings and illustrations, creating thousands of collages. They are photographed in sequence on an Oxberry animation stand using a Mitchell 35mm camera. Every second of screen time is comprised of approximately eight distinct collages. Each film took at least five years to complete.

Since 2006, Steers has expanded her work to include collaborative installations that join three-dimensional sculptural elements with film loops, creating a new interactive context for experiencing her films.





Edge of Alchemy, 2017, 19 minutes, 35mm to 4K
<https://vimeo.com/191596712> password: alchemy

Edge of Alchemy is the third film in a trilogy examining women's inner worlds. Mary Pickford and Janet Gaynor, delicately lifted from their early silent films, are seamlessly cast into a surreal epic with an upending of the Frankenstein story and a contemporary undercurrent of hive collapse. The music and sound design are by Polish composer Lech Jankowski (Brothers Quay).

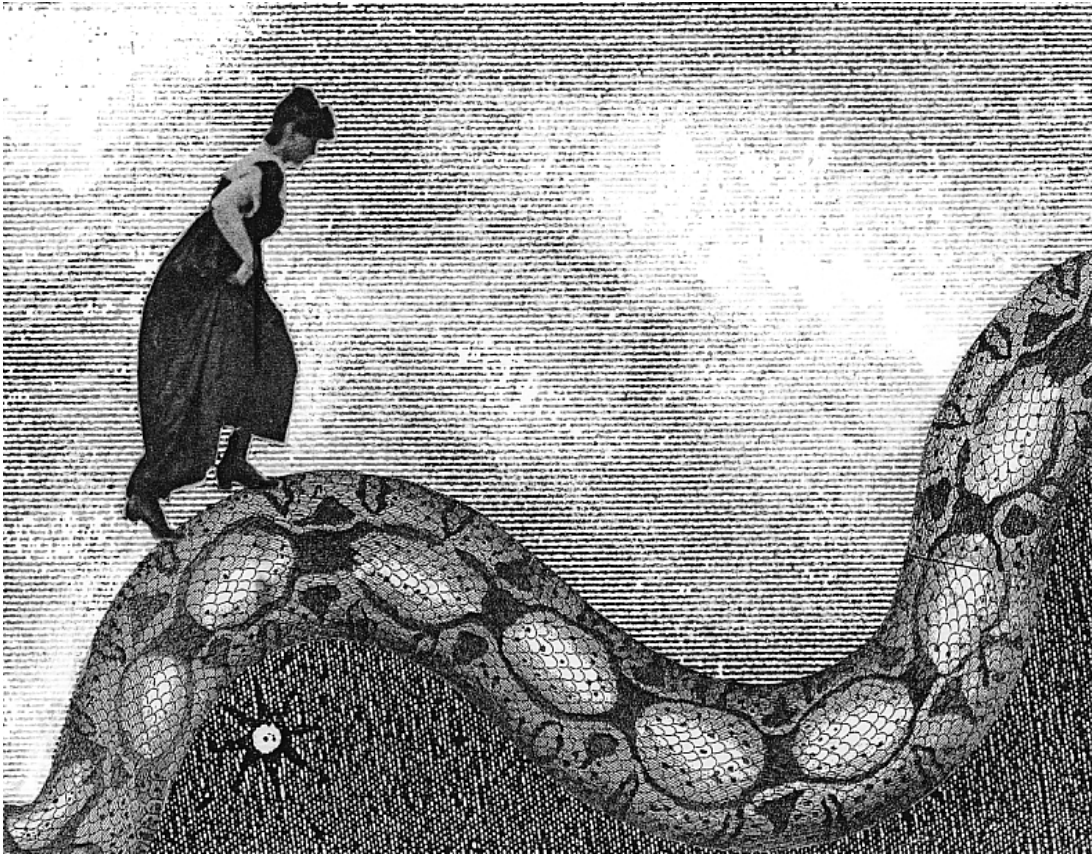
“I think Edge of Alchemy is the epitome of Stacey Steers' unique vision of collaged re-examination animations, an uncanny way to carry on in the great tradition of surrealist cinema. Max Ernst would refer to Lautréamont's sewing machine and umbrella to define the structure of the surrealist painting as 'a linking of two realities that by all appearances have nothing to link them, in a setting that by all appearances does not fit them'. I would add: making it all feel so flawlessly inevitable and inexplicably right...the 'feeling of form', as Suzanne K. Langer might have put it...” (Phil Solomon)



Night Hunter, 2011, 16 minutes, 35mm to Pro Res HD
<http://www.vimeo.com/29060053> password: hunter

Meticulously crafted from over 4000 handmade collages and incorporating images of Lillian Gish taken from silent-era live-action cinema, *Night Hunter* summons a disquieting dreamscape drawn from allegory, myth, and archetype to create an evocation of the uncanny and an exploration of the creative process. The music and sound design are by the composer Larry Polansky.

“*Night Hunter* is amazing, brilliant. A true horror movie of absolute essence, evoking the darkest of fairy tales and dream worlds from the deepest and most disquieting recesses of the mind body experience. Very disturbing in its haunting beauty and fluid, evocative (nothing so static as "symbolic" would imply) imagery, tensions, paradoxes—all the way through to the final "escape" (into the dark forest); Lillian Gish archetypically mesmerizing. In fact it all seems quite perfect—the rich and complex collages, the developing rhythms, the sound. A great work. Beyond words—of course.” (Marilyn Brakhage)



Phantom Canyon, 2010, 10 minutes, 35mm
<https://vimeo.com/29129884> password: phantom

Meticulous handmade collages explore a woman's fantastical journey through memories. Elements of 18th and 19th century engravings are combined with the figures from Eadweard Muybridge's **Human and Animal Locomotion**, first published in 1887. The music and sound design are by composer Bruce Odland.

“Stacey Steers creates an utterly distinctive style of low-tech animation that is at once antiquated and completely contemporary. Composed entirely from over 4000 handmade photomontages, her film brings to life images from 19th century science photographer Eadweard Muybridge. Eerily surreal and visually stunning, **Phantom Canyon** mixes its gorgeous imagery with an

equally beautiful, if not equally bizarre, score to create a true work of art.”
(Ann Arbor Film Festival)

Images for all three films were photographed in sequence on an Oxberry animation stand using a Mitchell 35mm camera. Every second of screen time is comprised of approximately eight distinct collages. Each film took at least five years to complete.

From the artist:

I'm very interested in process and how it resonates through any project. There is something about the physical process of creating my animation - cutting found images, placing one beneath another or cutting into an element to bring an earlier layer to the surface - that mimics for me the way we process experience and form memories. The technique itself also carries a kind of hyper-intensity that is a result of the flickering of all the projected image elements. The field of the film becomes energized. In animation we refer to that as “breathing” because the images appear to have their own life force.

Inspired by the Surrealist techniques of collage and montage, my films bring incongruous or unexpected objects into a pre-existing film frame or a newly assembled collage environment to suggest new narratives. Over time, I have learned that these unanticipated conjunctions of actors and print elements create a visual charge. Like the Surrealists, my working process is intuitive and allows the unconscious and non-rational to play a role. I unite elements with no obvious shared context and try to create an atmosphere where their alignment feels somehow natural and poetically sound.

I'm drawn to moments of ambiguity and intimacy and to actors who liked to add psychological complexity to their performances. My collage technique makes it possible for me to linger over very fleeting expressions and extend them in a way that emphasizes a state of interiority I am interested in exploring. I'm curious about the nature of longing -- how it provokes and mediates experience. I examine our emotional connection to, and multi-faceted psychological response towards, lived experience.

